Letter from Taizé

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Taizé
EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS
Budapest
30 December 91 – 4 January 92

SUMMER 91, WITH YOUNG PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR COUNTRY FOR THE FIRST TIME

see pages 2, 3 and 7

The expression of a trust

Why were there more young pilgrims in Taizé this year than last year? There is no way to ask the question to each person who came between late June and late September, between two and six thousand of them a week, gathered around the community to pray and to try and make their lives a pilgrimage of trust.

How to express the joy and the astonishment at seeing people om some countries arrive for the first me, for example four from Burma? he presence and the witness of young dults coming from countries that it is ot easy to leave was precious and reinded us that our solidarity must ntinue to grow wider.

Young Palestinians were present om the diocese of Jerusalem, and ere were young people from Cuba. wo young men from Guyana, mems of a tribal people, mine-workers, ld of their efforts for greater justice nd understanding between miners nd mine-owners. Two young women om Peru explained the work they do ith the women in their village where ere is neither water nor electricity, nd where the cholera epidemic has arved.

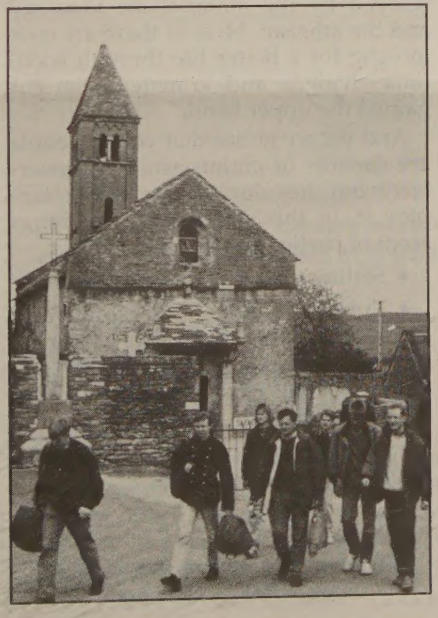
Young Indians in charge of pastoral ork with young adults in all of the gions of India spent four weeks in aizé, together with the bishop who is hairman of the youth commission. ater they made the pilgrimage to zestochowa.

This summer, there were a great many oung people present from every country Europe. Each week coaches went back nd forth between Taizé and Poland, Czeoslovakia, Hungary, Romania. Young dults from the Baltic countries and differnt republics of the former USSR took part the meetings. Some came from the reublics of central Asia or of the Far East.

For most of them, it was the first time ey had ever left their country after sevral generations of waiting. Knowing no foreign language, with almost no money, having brought their food with them, the journey was a real adventure, lasting several days in trains or buses.

One of the most powerful moments was the welcome of nine coaches of Ukrainians and the celebration by their bishop of the liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.

For them, sharing the realities of the faith and of Christian life is a brand-new experience. All are very sensitive to the least sign of interest or friendship; they interpret it at once as an expression of a trust. "In our country the system maintained itself by using fear and a worry that had invaded all the aspects of life. Here for the first time I felt secure; I discovered a deep-seated peace," said a young man from a Baltic country. The most powerful witness is that of people who, after so many years of suffering, have a transparent heart, free of bitterness or hatred. They have already begun to let trust grow all around them. Finding support in those who communicated Christ to them in the midst of the harshest trials - the great persecutions of the fifties, the deportations in Siberia - they draw from forgiveness the audacity for reconciliations.



They find in the trust of faith the energy to take up the great challenge with which their countries are confronted: to rebuild the economy but also human values, the social network, respect for others. They are the gentle of the Beatitudes: "the earth belongs to them."

Young people from North America took part in this summer's meetings in Taizé. They shared their astonishment and the seriousness of their searching:

"Since I have come to Taizé," said Marlon, of Hispanic background, who came with a small group from Boston representing many of the ethnic groups found in the USA, "a question keeps coming to my mind: why did we have to come all the way from Boston to this tiny village simply in order to live together? Is it really not possible to do this in our own country? Why is it so hard? Is it the presence of young people from all over the world here in Taizé that helps us?"

Two students from Washington DC explained how they happened to come to Taizé: "Our religious backgrounds are as varied as our personalities. One, an Orthodox Christian, whose family came from Ethiopia, and the other raised under the mantle of the Episcopal Church with Roman Catholic parents. We found that reconciliation in the sphere of belief was the key to understanding in other areas. Our questions propelled us toward Taizé, a community dedicated to reconciliation. The crisis in Kuwait sharpened our focus, and clarified our objectives. In the face of complexities that seemed to lead to war, and what seems to be an erosion of spiritual integrity in our time, we read of the brothers of Taizé. How do they attempt to reach for a peaceful world through understanding? We wanted to see for ourself a life of community that would seem to offer hope to a weary, war-torn world through trust placed in youth." ■

A new stage in the pilgrimage

The new stage in the pilgrimage of trust will take place in a different context than that of the meetings in Prague and Poland.

After the quickened pace of the changes in the Soviet Union and the bitter conflict in Yugoslavia, two neighbouring countries to Hungary, the next European meeting will be, for many young people, an opportunity to express their desire to take part in the building up of Europe.

After having participated in the intercontinental meetings in Taizé, many have become more attentive to the necessity of searching together for ways for no one to be forgotten, for each person to find a way of contributing their gifts to the building up of a Europe that is peaceful and liberated.

Pilgrims of trust, those who will come together in Hungary will find in the daily prayer services a wellspring to renew their commitment on behalf of others. By taking part in the life of families and Christian communities in Budapest and its surroundings, all will live a kind of anticipation of what Europe is called to become, in the joy of mutual welcome, in simplicity and trust.

Recently, the Catholic and Lutheran bishops of Magdeburg, in the former East Germany, wrote a letter together to Brother Roger. The two bishops had reflected together on the questions of their land and more generally on Eastern Europe. Here is part of what they wrote:

"In the present situation of our country, one thought keeps coming back in our conversations: could not the Taizé Community help us? When we realized that we were each asking the same question for ourselves, we decided to write to you.

"You know not only that great economic upheavals are taking place in East Germany, not only does everyone have to learn how to act in day-to-day life, but still more how much inner, spiritual attitudes have been affected.

"The work of the Church among young people is confronted with new tasks. This work needs to be partially reorganized. We know how important and strong, and ever stronger, in many people, is the resonance of their encounter with Taizé in the past and still today. Today, when the horizon of Europe is widening to the East, people realize that your community has been looking from the beginning toward the whole of Europe, has been oriented towards it.

"We are convinced that the young, here in East Germany and in Eastern Europe, will need in the next few years help for their spiritual life, for a new vitality, to keep up their hope and their trust. If your community can come to help, we want to collaborate with it."

The young Hungarians who came to Taizé this summer shared their questions and their hopes in this period of reconstruction. Some expressed their expectations in this way: "In past years, many people in our country have been spiritually destroyed by the materialistic ideology and the atheism. Most of them are now looking for a better life through economic changes, and so materialism has gained the upper hand.

And yet we notice that young people are capable of enthusiasm and generosity, but they don't know how to employ it. In this situation, three things seem of particular importance to us:

- Setting up a true scale of values.
- Finding signs, in personal and community life, that make it visible that we belong to Christ, and that are accessible both inside and outside of the Church.
- Finding ways to develop community life in the parishes.

By the varied aspects that make it up, the European meeting will try to respond to many expectations. One of the many young people who will come from the new republics of the Soviet Union expressed this desire when he was in Taizé:

«We are looking forward to the European meeting as to a festival, a great celebration that you are happy about a long time beforehand. It will be a chance to help young people to discover prayer and the Church, young people who are searching for inner life and fellowship, but have no roots in the faith: for these young people, traditional liturgical expressions or a sense of the Church are still inaccessible in our context, as we just begin to emerge from a totalitarianism that had frozen and shrunk everything.»"

A Polish boy emphasized another aspect: "In our countries of central Europe, the life of the Church has been in effect paralyzed for fifty years and we have the impression that we need to catch up. In Budapest, we will try to find rest for our hearts so that we can breath again as we go after what is new.

We need to stop a moment to renew our trust and to become aware of who we are. In central Europe, the re-awakening of nationalism impedes the search for universal values. It seems to me that the Hungarians have much to say to us on this subject; in their situation the values common to all are clearer." ■

St. Stephen's church in Budapest

Welcome to Hungary!

Taizé

EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS

Budapest

30 December 91 – 4 January 92

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Dates: Arrive Monday, 30 December 1991 between 9am and 12 noon. Depart mid-afternoon Saturday, 4 January 1992.

General Programme: We will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city. In each neighbourhood there will be a morning prayer, then meetings in small groups and visits of people with an involvement in the local area. Each day there will be two common prayers for everyone in the city-centre; in the afternoon, workshops on different themes.

Send in your registration form by 1 December at the latest.

Accommodation: with families and in halls. Simple conditions. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress. Groups should not arrange their own accommodation in advance as this detracts from the element of sharing.

17 to 29 year olds: three different ways of taking part:

- participation in the life of the parishes
- the silence group (separate accommodation).
- while still participating in the life of the parishes, helping with practical work for the meeting, or "animation", or music for the common prayers. To do this, arrive, if possible, on December 28 between 9am and 3pm. It is not possible to arrive on Dec. 29.

15 year olds can only take part if accompanied by a group leader over 20 for each small group of 7, boys and girls separate; the leader must stay with them. They will participate in the main group (see above) from 30 December on (do not arrive before).

Adults over 30 all participate in the main group (see above) from 30 December on (do not arrive before). Those who cannot stay in the same simple conditions as the young people and need a "real bed" indicate this on their registration form. Those who are accompanying a group of young people are welcome to stay with them if they will accept the same simple accommodation.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should register directly to Taizé -- best by telephone in October or November -- to arrange suitable accommodation.

Your contribution (about £40) covers meals, transport, and other costs. Exact price will be sent to those who register.

Travel, from Britain: 1. Coach. Departure from London, very early 29th December. Return to London, late evening 5th January. (Price £150: Nuneaton Coaches, Whitacre Road, NUNEATON, CV11 6BN. Tel: (0203) 325682 / 328410. Fax: (0203) 375875. **To arrive on December 28th** to help: either go with the coach leaving Taizé just after Christmas (contact Taizé for exact time and price), or coach from London by Nuneaton Coaches. **From other countries:** write to Taizé for information. Fuller information will be sent in November to those who have already registered.

Those who live in Ireland and Britain send their forms to a contact person (see page 7). Only the following should register direct to Taizé: families with children; those with special accommodation needs; anyone living outside Britain.

Suggestions for the preparation

So that the European meeting can help us to respond to strong expectations, how can we prepare ourselves at home? Some suggestions have already been made in the preceding Letter from Taizé:

Meetings can be organized, for example once a month, to pray and share. It is a good idea to invite people who will not be going to Budapest. Here are some elements to include in these meetings:

- a prayer (prayer around the cross, if it is a Friday evening).
- Johannine hours(see pages 5 and 6 of this letter).
- sharing in small groups on part of the Letter from Prague. For example on note 25, which speaks about the sharing of material goods and of cultures: ...With respect to the European continent, it is urgent to construct a «European family». Each of the nations of Europe needs to live in complementarity with the others. And, far from remaining turned in upon itself, Europe will always discover part of its own genius in solidarity with the nations of other continents. What links would we like to create and strengthen, during this time of preparation, to discover this complementarity?
- sharing in small groups on the question: what can we do so that the pilgrimage to Budapest is rooted in the life of our Christian communities and so that, when we return, it can help give new vitality and inspiration to our local situations.
- reflecting about visits to make to others nearby, and on the signs of hope present in our situations, in our neighbourhoods.

It is a good idea too to propose a prayer service before leaving for Budapest. During this prayer, the presence of local or diocesan Church leaders could be a sign that those leaving for the gathering are being sent out "on pilgrimage." The next Letter from Taizé will propose a format for such a prayer.

European Meeting Registration Form. Send in by December 1st

FIRST NAME :

FAMILY NAME :

ADDRESS :

(with post code and country)

Tel.: ...../..... Occupation: ..... Age : .....

Circle "Yes" or "No" *or complete where necessary:*

- I am coming with a group from the town of .....
  led by .....
- For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor:
  I need a bed: yes / no : *If "yes", say whether you are (please circle):*
  woman man couple family with ... children disabled person with helper
- I will arrive on 30th December: yes / no (arrival between 7am and 12pm)
- I will arrive on 28th December (17-30 year olds only): yes / no
  to help with **(please circle):** animation / work / music team.
- N.B. If, for any reason, you are arranging your own accommodation please send us the address where you will be staying.
- I would like ... more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible)

You will receive power

Reflection on the theme of the Holy Spirit

The Christian faith is not first of all a philosophy or a series of commandments to obey but a life, a life that comes from God and which we are invited to take part in. Reflecting on the theme of the Holy Spirit will help us understand better this essential dimension of our faith.

Shortly after his resurrection, Jesus told his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1,8). Here we have a first approach to understanding something of the Spirit: an inner dynamism that comes from God and that makes the apostles witnesses to Christ, a vitality that propels them further and further on the road of sharing their faith with others.

But where does the Biblical notion of the Spirit come from? Let us now look at how the Hebrew Scriptures, our Old Testament, refer to the Holy Spirit, even though we realize as Christians that we must turn to the Gospel for a complete understanding of this reality.

First of all, God's Spirit sets apart human beings to do God's work. In the early days in the land of Canaan, a provisional leader, called a "judge," led the people each time a crisis arose. The Book of Judges sees this as a result of the presence of the Spirit in that person (e.g. Judg 3,10; 6,34). Later on, when they wish to have a permanent leader, Samuel chooses Saul for this role and anoints him as king (1 Sam 10,1). Immediately afterwards, Saul has an experience of the Spirit by joining a band of "prophets" (10,9-12). In this ancient text, the presence of God's Spirit is visible by clear outward signs: Saul is "changed into a different person" (10,6). And when his successor David is chosen, the link with the Spirit is even closer (1 Sam 16,13).

David was generally a good king, but his successors often did not lead the people in accordance with the will of God. So other individuals arose to show their contemporaries what God wanted of them. These are the ones we call the prophets, and they too claim to be inspired by God's Spirit (Micah 3,8; Ezek 2,2; 11,5).

But with the prophets, we come to a problem that inevitably accompanies all who speak of the presence of God's Spirit. This problem is clearly formulated in chapter 22 of the First Book of Kings. The king of Israel wants to fight a battle. All the prophets he questions, except one, tell him to go ahead, but that one tells him it is not God's will. What is to be done, when the prophets do not agree? How can we know what comes from the Spirit? Here we find the theme of the discernment of spirits: every inspiration does not necessarily come from the Spirit of God.

In fact, some of the greatest prophets hardly speak at all of the Spirit. Jeremiah, for example, speaks instead of the Word of God: "The Word of the Lord came to me, saying...". Word implies message, content: words can be verified by comparing them to other words said by prophets in the past. In this way, gradually, a tradition takes shape. It is thus very important that the Spirit not be separated from the Word and, in fact, in the Bible the two are quite often linked.

Second, the Spirit is the breath o God that creates, that gives existenc and life. In Gen 2,7a, God is de scribed as a potter who forms th human being (adam) from the dus of the ground (adamah). But wit this God's work is not yet done: "h breathed into his nostrils the breat of life, and Adam became a livin being" (Gen 2,7b). Even if huma beings are of the earth, to be full themselves they need to receive di rectly from God this gift of a life breath. They are created by the en counter of two realities: the dust o the ground and the breath or spirit o God.

Similarly, in Psalm 104,29-30, th author sees creation as an ongoing re ality where life and death succee each other, when God gives and take back his breath or Spirit. And th first story of creation in Gen 1 say "...the Spirit (or a wind) of God ho vered over the waters" (Gen 1,2) Both the Jewish and Christian tradi tions have generally seen in this vers an allusion to the Spirit of God tha prepares the chaos to welcome th Word of God. Creation is thus th work of "the two hands of God" (S Irenaeus), his Spirit and his Word This collaboration is likewise men tioned in Ps 33,6: "By the Word o the Lord the heavens were made their starry host by the breath of hi mouth."

Finally, the Spirit is occasionall presented as the presence of God tha guides human beings. In Isa 63,7f the Spirit of the Lord leads th people during the Exodus fron Egypt. The prophet calls the people' refusal to follow the ways of Go "grieving his Holy Spirit" (63,10; c Eph 4,30). And the Wisdom liter ature sometimes speaks of an inne inspiration that sets us on the righ road (Job 32,8; cf. Prov 20,27); th ability to distinguish good from ev is thus seen as coming from the Spir of God. ■

Meditating on the word

November

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 Fri **Mt 5.1-12** • *1 Jn 3.1-3*
ALL SAINTS How great a love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called God's children. And that is what we are!

2 Sat **Jn 11.25-26** • *Rm 14.7-9*
While we live, as when we die, we belong to the Lord. For Christ died and returned to life that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

3 SUN Dt 6.2-6 • ***Mk 12.28b-34***
Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. These are the two greatest commandments.

4 Mon **Lk 15.1-7** • *1 S 3.1-9*
Eli told Samuel: If you are called again, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

5 Tue Lk 15.8-10 • ***1 S 16.1-13***
The Lord said to Samuel: Take no notice of his appearance. God does not see as human beings see: they look at the appearance but God looks at the heart.

6 Wed Lk 15.11-24 • ***1 Ch 29.10-15***
David prayed saying: Everything comes from you, our God, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are guests before you and passing visitors on this earth.

7 Thu 1 Ch 29.17-20 • ***Lk 15.25-32***
The father of the prodigal son said to his elder son, "It is only right that we should celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!"

8 Fri Lk 16.13-16 • ***Ne 8.3,8-10***
Do not be sad or afflicted: God's joy is your strength.

9 Sat Lk 17.3-6 • ***Ne 9.17-19***
Because of your great compassion, Lord, you did not abandon your people in the desert. The pillar of cloud did not cease to lead them by day, nor did the pillar of fire cease to light their way by night.

10 SUN 1 K 17.10-16 • ***Mk 12.41-44***
Jesus saw a poor widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed."

11 Mon 1 Th 4.7-9 • ***Lk 17.11-19***
To the Samaritan who returned to tahnk Jesus for healing him, Jesus said: Rise and go. Your faith has saved you.

12 Tue **Lk 17.20-21** • *1 Th 5.1-6*
You are children of light, children of the day. So let us not slumber but stay awake.

13 Wed Lk 17.22-25 • ***1 Th 5.16-24***
Be always joyful, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances.

14 Thu Lk 18.1-8 • ***2 Th 2.13-14***
God chose you from the beginning to be saved by faith in the truth and by the Spirit.

15 Fri **Lk 18.9-14** • *2 Th 2.15-17*
May our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father who has given us his love and, through his grace, such ceaseless encouragement and sure hope, encourage and strengthen you in every good word and deed.

16 Sat Lk 18.15-17 • ***2 Th 3.3-5,16***
God is faithful, he will give you strength and protect you from the evil one.

17 SUN Heb 10.11-14,18 • ***Mk 13.24-32***
Jesus said: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

18 Mon Rv 1.4-8 • ***Lk 18.18-27***
Jesus said to a man: You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.

19 Tue **Lk 18.28-30** • *Rv 1.17-18*
John writes: One like a son of man, Christ, put his hand on me and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last, the Living One. I was dead and now I am alive for all time."

20 Wed Lk 18.31-34 • ***Rv 2.8-10***
The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death.

21 Thu **Rv 2.17** • *Lk 18.35-43*
Jesus said to a blind man: Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you. And instantly his sight returned and he followed Jesus, glorifying God.

22 Fri Lk 19.1-10 • ***Rv 3.7-12***
Thus says the Lord: Though you are not very strong, you have kept my Word, and now I have opened before you a door that no one can close.

23 Sat Lk 19.28-40 • ***Rv 3.20-22***
I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

24 SUN Dn 7.13-14 • ***Jn 18.33b-37***
Jesus said to Pilate: My kingdom is not of this world. I came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.

25 Mon Lk 20.9-19 • ***Rv 21.1-4***
God will make his home among human beings; they will be his people and he will be their God.

26 Tue **Lk 20.20-26** • *Rv 21.5-7*
God says: I am the Beginning and the End. I shall give water from the well of life freely to anyone who is thirsty.

27 Wed Rv 21.10-25 • ***Lk 21.8,12-19***
Jesus said to his disciples: You will be persecuted because of my name. But make up your mind not to worry about how to defend yourselves, for I shall give you words and wisdom.

28 Thu Lk 21.29-33 • ***Rv 22.1-5***
The servants of God will see him face to face and his name will be written on their foreheads. It will never be night again, and they will not need the light of a lamp or of the sun, because the Lord God will be shining upon them.

29 Fri 1 Jn 5.1-4 • ***Lk 22.24-27***
Jesus said to his disciples: Who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet I am among you as one who serves.

30 Sat **Mk 16.15-20** • *1 Co 9.16-23*
St ANDREW Paul writes: For me, preaching the Gospel is not something to boast about, it is a necessity.

Johannine Hours

John 3,22-30

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

A discussion concerning baptism is the occasion for John the Baptist to specify his relationship to Christ. And he does this by referring to himself as "the bridegroom's friend" (a Hebrew expression for the best man at a wedding) with respect to the bridegroom who is Christ. The image of a wedding was used by the prophets to describe the relationship between God and his people (Hos 2,21; Ezek 16,8), and Jesus applied the title "bridegroom" to himself (Mark 2,19). In this way John explains his role, which is that of preparing Christ's coming, of remaining in the humble and helpful attitude of a person whose only purpose is to serve the realization of a plan that is infinitely greater than his own understanding.

And John tells us that there he finds the secret of perfect joy (v.29). He has emptied himself to such an extent that there is nothing in him that holds him back or blocks the light. He has no need to "succeed," nor even to be thanked for what he does. Pure transparence, perfect listening, he lets Christ's voice resound within him. He has found the source of joy in communion with Someone else, in the conviction that everything is a gift (v.27).

Like that of the Virgin Mary (cf. Luke 1,26-38), the Baptist's attitude makes possible the transition from the first Covenant to the Gospel. His expectant waiting is transfigured into fullness as soon as Christ's voice rings out. He shows us what it means to be a disciple—to keep nothing back for oneself in order to make room for Christ; to give all in order to receive all, and to receive all in order to share it with others.

- How does the example of John the Baptist show us what the spirit of poverty according to the Beatitudes (Matt 5,3) consists in, and its link with joy?
- How can we share with others what we have received; how can we let Christ grow in us?

Meditating on the word

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

December

1 SUN Mk 13.33-37 • ***Jr 33.14-16***
ADVENT Days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall fulfil the promise of happiness I made to my people, and from among them I shall raise one who will do what is just and right in the land.

2 Mon Mt 8.5-11 • ***Is 2.1-5***
Isaiah said: The mountain of the Lord will rise up higher than the hills, and the peoples of the earth will say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord so that he may teach us his ways.

3 Tue Is 4.2-6 • ***Lk 10.21-24***
Jesus said: I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and clever, and revealing them to little children.

4 Wed Mt 15.29-37 • ***Is 8.11-18***
Isaiah said: When he laid his hand upon me, God told me, "Do not fear all that people fear. Do not be afraid. I am the one whom you are to regard as holy."

5 Thu Is 11.1-4 • ***Mt 7.21-27***
Jesus said: Whoever listens to my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock.

6 Fri Mt 9.27-31 • ***Is 11.5-9***
Isaiah said: On that day there shall be no more hurt or violence, for the land will be filled with the knowledge of God as the water covers the bottom of the sea.

7 Sat Is 11.10-16 • ***Lk 1.26-38***
Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

8 SUN Ba 5.1-9 • ***Lk 3.1-6***
John the Baptist came as is written in the book of Isaiah: A voice of one who cries in the desert, "Prepare a way for the Lord, make straight his paths!"

9 Mon Lk 5.17-26 • ***Is 12.2-6***
I will trust and not be afraid, for God is my strength and my song.

10 Tue Is 25.1-5 • ***Mt 18.12-14***
Jesus said: If the shepherd finds his lost sheep, it gives him more joy than the ninety-nine that did not stray at all. In the same way, it is not the will of your Father in heaven for any of these little ones to be lost.

11 Wed **Mt 11.28-30** • *Is 25.6-8*
The Lord has destroyed the veil of mourning that enfolded all peoples. He has swallowed up death forever.

12 Thu Mt 11.11-15 • ***Is 26.4,7-9***
Lord, you level out the path of the just. As we follow the path of your judgements, we set our hope in you; you are the desire of our souls.

13 Fri Mt 17.10-13 • ***Is 26.12-19***
Isaiah said: You who dwell in the dust, wake up and sing for joy: your dead will live.

14 Sat Is 28.16-17 • ***Lk 1.67-73***
Zechariah prophesied: Blessed be the Lord, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and established for us a power of salvation.

15 SUN Zp 3.14-18 • ***Lk 3.10-18***
John the Baptist said: I baptise you with water, but one stronger than I is coming and he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

16 Mon Jn 5.33-36 • ***Is 30.15-16,18***
The Lord says: Your salvation is in returning and rest, your strength lies in calm and trust.

17 Tue Is 49.13 • ***Mt 9.35-38***
At the sight of the crowds Jesus was moved to compassion, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

18 Wed Lk 1.5-17 • ***Jr 23.5-6***
The Lord says: The days are coming, when I shall raise up an upright Branch, and in his days my people will be saved. And this is the name he will be called: "The Lord our Righteousness."

19 Thu Lk 1.18-25 • ***Heb 10.36-37***
You need to persevere. For in just a very little while, he who is coming will come – he will not delay.

20 Fri Is 7.10-16 • ***Lk 1.46-56***
Mary said: My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of his humble servant.

21 Sat 1 S 1.24-2.1 • ***Lk 1.74-80***
Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, prophesied: You, little child, will be called Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare a way for him.

22 SUN Mi 5.1-4 • ***Lk 1.39-45***
Elizabeth said to Mary: Blessed is she who believed that the promise the Lord made her would be fulfilled.

23 Mon 2 S 7.1-16 • ***Mt 1.18-24***
The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

24 Tue Tt 2.11-14 • *Lk 2.1-14* • *Is 9.1-6*
To us a child is born, to us a son is given. And this is the name he has been given: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

25 Wed Is 62.11-12 • *Tt 3.4-7* • *Lk 2.15-20*
CHRISTMAS The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him and then returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

26 Thu Mt 10.17-22 • *Ac 7.55-60* • *Ps 34.1-9*
St STEPHEN Those who fix their eyes on God will become radiant; shame will no longer cloud their faces.

27 Fri **Mk 1.16-20** • *1 Jn 1.1-4*
St JOHN Life itself became visible, we saw it and testify to it. We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was revealed to us.

28 Sat Jr 31.16-17a • ***Lk 9.46-48***
Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

29 SUN 1 Jn 3.1-3 • ***Lk 17.20-21***
Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you.

30 Mon Mt 6.25-33 • ***Ep 3.17-19***
May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may you be rooted and established in love, so that knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

31 Tue 2 Co 12.7-10 • ***Jn 3.16-17***
God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him.

Johannine Hours

Malachi 2,17 - 3,4

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

The sometimes perplexing realities of human life can call into question our faith in a God of justice and mercy. This was the case for the people of Israel in the years after their return from exile in Babylon. The plans of those who cared neither for God nor for their fellow citizens seemed to prosper, whereas those who tried to follow the ways of the Lord appeared to receive no benefit from it. Some even went to the point of doubting the identity of their God: have we made a mistake?

The prophet responds to this questioning by a reaffirmation of the basic hope that undergirds the whole history of the nation. No, God has not changed; he has not forgotten us. He is coming, and his coming will put things back into place. It will reveal the hidden reality of persons and events by removing the layer of dust that had obscured them. Then, an authentic relationship will be possible between the Lord and his people; their prayer will be a true expression of the love of God within them.

To understand the true meaning of Malachi's images, we have to superimpose on them what we know of the coming of Christ Jesus. In him, God does not come by calling down fire to destroy the earth but as a humble being born in poverty. And who could insist on their rights or their achievements in front of the child of Bethlehem? This manifestation of God, so disconcerting and so disarming, truly puts things into their proper places by bringing us back to the truth of our human condition.

- What enables us to face events that could call into question our faith in a God of justice and love?
  How does the figure of the child Jesus help us to understand the truth of our human condition?

A new responsibility

To continue the presentation of the life of Christians in Hungary, one f the people who had welcomed and repared the meeting in Pécs two years go expressed his hopes in the new so- al and political situation of his ountry:

"Each country has its own character, ot only its folk traditions, but also its ay of being, and its way of living its ith, its charism. For this reason, we ave a lot to share and to receive from ne another. How do we see our place Europe? We are torn between two elings. On the one hand, we see our- lves as a somewhat isolated minority ecause our language does not belong any of the great linguistic families - ermanic, Slavic or Romance. On the ther hand we know, and we are roud, that we are an integral part of ie history of Europe because we were ie last bastion against the Turkish and longolian invasions. In this respect, e are the gateway to the West. For ie last thousand years, since the arri- al of Christianity and the existence of ur nation, we have always been in anger of losing our liberty. For xample, for 150 years much of Hun- ary was occupied by the Turks.

What can we do now? How can we se our freedom after fifty years of op- ression? Here is an example of the uestions that have arisen. In 1950, in ne night, all the monasteries and con- ents were closed. Monks and nuns ere sent to prison or to work camps. ow that these buildings can be re- ored to us, how can we begin again? lost of the religious are 60 or older. ome want to live again as they did rty years ago, and others want to live e religious in the West.

Theoretical materialism has disap- eared, but a practical materialism re- ains against which it is more difficult struggle. You could argue against eoretical materialism, but against ractical materialism you have to offer mething living, a form of Christian fe, an alternative. So what is our uty?

A first step for all of us is conversion. In ur situation the notions of «faith» and eligiosity» are still synonyms. Religiosity n be received by education; faith in- lves a personal decision. We need to lp all those who are searching to reach is personal decision.

A second task is reconciliation. These past forty years, some Christians have remained faithful to the Church and have witnessed visibly to their affiliation. Others were Christians, but in secret. Officially, they were linked to the party. Now they too are in the churches. Why? Is it a new fashion for them? Some people point fingers at them. Here, our duty is to look for reconciliation. Reconciliation is also necessary between the different spiritual movements that are beginning. Sometimes their members see only their movement and forget the unity of the Church. And between different Churches, we are far from living as reconciled people, even if there are many good personal relationships. The wounds of history are still open and still today foster misunderstandings and the same old arguments.

Another task: invite people to church. People would like to belong in a certain sense, but they do not know the way. We must show them this way and we must also stop criticizing those who are already there and who we consider too inactive. This means building up parish communities from within, helping people understand that each person supports the community by their attachment to Christ. Those who cannot take on active commitments can support others who can. In our parish, a few people are visiting everyone at home, and have amazing experiences. People are astonished that we do not ask for money. When the visitors say that they are bringing a letter from the parish priest, they are often welcomed warmly and a discussion can begin. These visits help people to feel less isolated, to feel more a part of the neighbourhood, with no distinction between Christians and non-Christians.

Another task: to educate ourselves in the faith. For forty years, there was almost no in-depth formation for lay people in Pécs. A few years ago, a course of theology began. At the beginning, there were about fifty persons, and now, in the first year of freedom, there were 170. We also need to find co-workers for religion classes in the schools. These classes are optional and not graded, but the children who attend often have no foundations and know nothing about faith. Parents sometimes send their children so that they can receive a moral teaching or learn about European Christian culture. But for the children this can be an opportunity to discover something deeper about faith and the Church. Some children do not even know where the church in their neighbourhood is!

We also have to respond to expectations concerning the Church's role in social and cultural life. Up to now Christians could only be active inside the walls of the churches. Now we understand that love for our neighbours includes responsibility in society, and so we have began, for example, to organize the work of Caritas."

You can join in preparations for the Budapest European Meeting

through one of these contact people. It is also to them that registration forms should be sent. N.B. Please send 2 s.a.e.'s when registering and do not send a registration form to more than one address, but only to the contact person nearest you! Contact people are volunteers - please don't forget to sent the s.a.e.'s and do not cause them unnecessary expenses, for example by obliging them to make long phone calls to you.

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listening to the continents

Philippines

The important thing in life

Someone who took part in the preparation and the animation of the meeting in Manila last February wrote:

This morning the news said that Mt Pinatubo has blown again and the mud has buried six barangays (districts) in Porac. Porac is a town just beside Floridablanca, where my home is situated. During the first eruption, only my sister and my mother were there. My father reached them only the next day. They evacuated to Manila together with all the families of the area. Only a few houses were still standing when they left. Most had given way to the weight of the sand, ash, stones and rain.

Floridablanca, like the other towns affected by the eruption, looks like a desert. Many of the natives preferred not to evacuate because the mountain was their life. Many of them were buried under the ashes. I find it hard to believe that one of the mountains that I admired and loved and greeted since I was a child could turn the grass and the trees to grey and pull down the homes of my friends and send thousands of families on an exodus to uncertainty.

While this all was happening, I could only listen, watch and be with the people in my soul. Maybe I have learned to trust that God is watching over us. He is there with all those we cannot reach.

Poverty, crises, calamities can bring out the best and the worst. They make us learn what is most important in our lives. God is really so patient with us. What is happening to us is part of the history of the changes in the earth. Science helps us understand that we cannot fight natural events. We should learn to cope with them and survive them.

The regular Tuesday prayers continue and help us a lot. We feel more and more the bond that makes us a community. Knowing too that we are bonded to a universal Church who prays and who witnesses to Christ's light helps us keep our flames burning.

Ethiopia

A hope for peace

"I have the opportunity of continuing my studies in Canada and I have found a warm welcome in the Christian communities there. I was recently in my country. The situation is now so complicated and unpredictable.

The young people see no hope. No one goes to school; the pupils hide so they are not drafted into the army. So many children have been forced to bear arms and have been killed! The younger generation does not know what the words peace and freedom mean. In this climate of fear and darkness, the Churches are places where the hope for peace remains alive, especially on account of prayer."

United States

The sign of a community

Among the young North Americans who were in Taizé this summer was Makara, who lives on the Lower East Side of New York. He said in Taizé: "I live in a bad neighborhood; many young people live in the street, caught in the trap of drugs. Many of them are my friends. We grew up together. I could be lost like them, if I didn't have first my parents, then the presence of the Church through some committed persons.

If the Church could be more present to young people just as they are, listening to them, if the parishes understood this, then they would participate. They need to see something inviting: I see a constant welcome, a very simple meal but one prepared with care, a time to listen to one another, express your questions, share your troubles, and at the end a prayer, some singing, a Gospel text. It should be their prayer, but also a discovery of what is really important. This hospitality should awaken them to the presence of Christ.

I'm already trying to be with them and to help them, but I can't do it alone, what's needed is the hospitality and the sign of a community. They need to see and to feel a part of it. They would understand right away, because that's what they are looking for and wish for deep in their hearts, even if they can't express it in words. There's no time to lose; I feel responsible for them, what they feel can at any moment explode into acts of violence or irrational behavior. And yet I know them, I love them and my heart is so often broken because of them."

Young adult gathering in North America

A stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" will be held in

DAYTON, OHIO

May 21-25, 1992

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